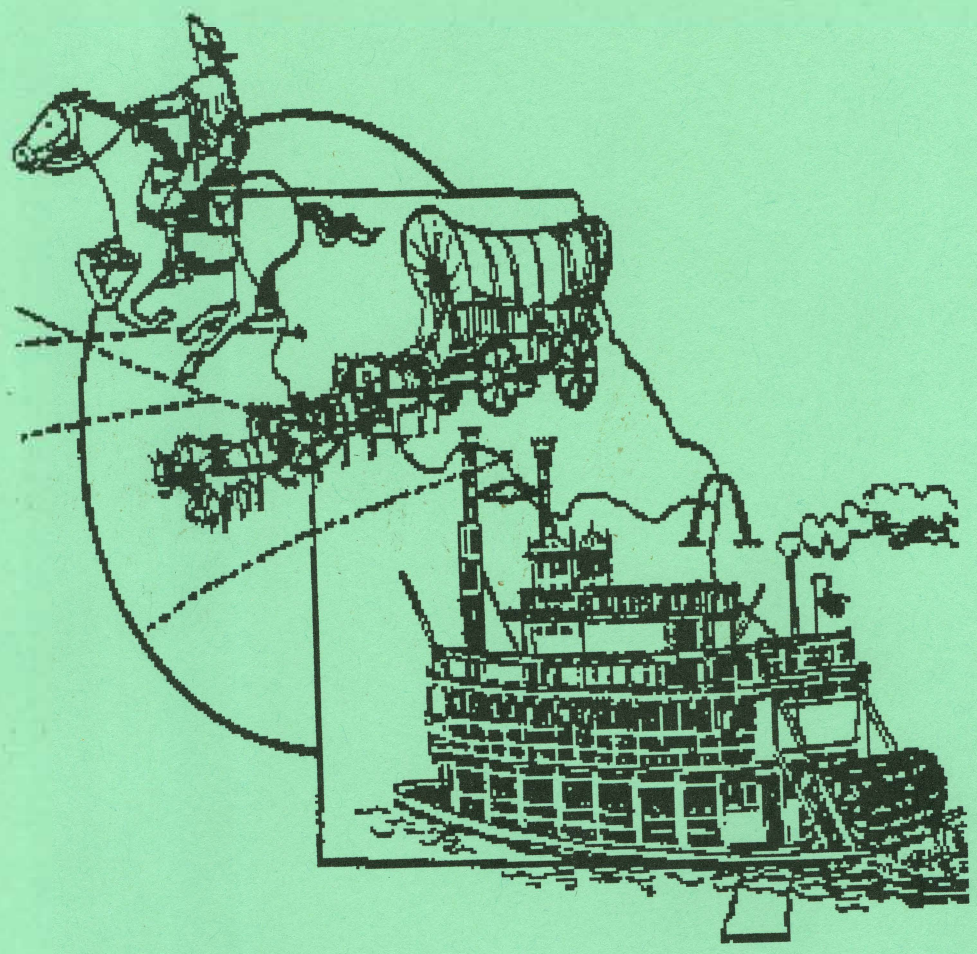

Toward The Setting Sun

2nd Series, Vol. 5, No. 2 Spring 2007

TOWARD THE SETTING SUN

The Historical Journal of the Missouri Conference

The United Methodist Church

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INTRODUCTION

Spring has come to Missouri, and this issue of *Toward the Setting Sun* is late in getting to you. For that I apologize. Actually, I have several excellent excuses, but they aren't of any particular value, so we'll skip them. There is hope that future issues will be more timely.

It's fascinating that continuing generations of United Methodists are fascinated by the schism of 1844 and all that led up to it. Our article, *Anatomy of a Schism*, was written by Elaine Burleigh. Elaine was a student at St. Paul School of Theology when she wrote this article, as part of an assignment for the course in United Methodist History, taught by your editor. Elaine is a native of Louisiana and is now back in her home state serving a church.

We also continue the series we've begun using articles written by C.O Ransford, whose interest in Methodist history (prior to even 1939, let alone 1968) led him to write many articles for the Conference Journal. This one, *Methodism in North West Missouri*, deals with the church in that area in the early 20th century. Since that's now 100 years ago, some may think it qualifies as 'ancient' history, but it is an important look into some of our roots.

Finally, your editor returns to print with *Some Notes on "the Jerks."* This is not a value judgment on persons, as the title might suggest. Rather it is about the strong emotional and physical reaction to revival preaching in camp meetings and elsewhere nearly 200 years ago.

We have more material on hand, ready for future issues, but always welcome new articles or new ideas for articles. If you would like to write for *Toward the Setting Sun*, but aren't sure about your topic, we have a "wish list.." We also offer encouragement and suggestions for articles on which you are working. If you don't have a major article, we have a section of "Historical Notes" that is an excellent place for short articles, even paragraphs, about some area of history in your community that relates to churches in the Wesleyan tradition. Contact me at jogooch@aol.com with ideas, articles, questions, suggestions.

John O. Gooch

Editor

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ANATOMY OF A SCHISM

Elaine M. Burleigh

In this paper, I will examine the phenomenon of schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church, focusing primarily on several ruptures within the Church whose roots can be traced to the democratic principles which permeated the nation during the later decades of the 18th and first decades of the 19th centuries, and to the social and political tensions surrounding the issue of slavery in this country. The purpose of this analysis is to inquire about the lessons that have been, or could be, learned from our painful history of schism; to ask what, if anything, can be done to avoid schism in the future; to suggest that schism may at times be unavoidable, and quite possibly the *best* course of action under certain circumstances; and to suggest that the impact of schism on the people, on the nation, and on Christianity as a whole depends to a large extent upon how the various parties in the dispute conduct themselves before, during and after separation.

Having become a "national church" in fact if not in law, the Methodist Episcopal Church in the 19th century was unavoidably influenced by the political philosophies with which the nation struggled, and ultimately was drawn into the political debates and crisis that gripped the nation over the issue of slavery and democracy for all. Before the *nation* knew that it was being drawn inextricably into civil war, so too was the Methodist Episcopal Church being drawn toward schism. And I believe schism was inevitable – both for the nation and for the Church. At a time when the United States was struggling to define its national identity and character, the Methodist Episcopal Church was forced to confront the same questions about its identity. In the midst of the political and social turmoil faced by the nation, the Church was forced to decide who it

was, what it was called to do, and how it would undertake to fulfill its calling. As is often the case, such issues lie just below the surface of any nation or institution until a crisis develops; then the issues are forced to the surface and demand resolution just when the stakes are at their highest and measured, rational debate is most difficult. The period covered by this analysis was just such a time. With so much at stake, it's not at all surprising that the outcome for the Methodist Episcopal Church was schism, again and again. Under the circumstances, perhaps separation was even necessary in order for the Church to continue its mission.

Had the leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church recognized earlier the dangers looming on the horizon and made a greater effort at an earlier date to bring extremists in the debates together in negotiation, perhaps the separation might have been delayed. Especially with respect to the schism that resulted in the Plan of Separation adopted by the 1844 General Conference, had the Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church provided for an effective judicial process *separate* from the General Conference itself, one capable of fairly and properly adjudicating the interests of the parties involved, the separation might have been delayed. If the Church had been less concerned with maintaining peace within its fellowship and instead had remained more focused on the Wesleyan emphasis of saving souls, then perhaps the extreme positions could have been avoided and separation might have been delayed. Yet, in the end, the forces with which the nation struggled, and which eventually tore it apart, were bound to do the same to the church. In a nation and a Church of such great diversity, schism was inevitable.

Though I deplore the bitterness that seems to accompany any debate which threatens to result in schism, I reluctantly acknowledge that sometimes separation is

not just inevitable, but also necessary. In fact, if undertaken properly, separation *can be* a healthy way to preserve the Wesleyan mission of spreading Scriptural holiness throughout a very diverse land, at least in theory. Human nature being what it is, however, it's unlikely that any separation, especially the Plan of Separation adopted by the General Conference of 1844, could ever have been implemented without significant conflict and discord. My heart aches when I think what this might mean for the future of the United Methodist Church today as we again must redefine the identity and character of our Church in the midst of intense national and social conflict concerning the definition of "family."

EARLY HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Certainly, the 1844 schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church was not the first it faced. In 1789, many of the African American members of St. George's church in Philadelphia, walked out of worship, led by Richard Allen, over the issue of segregation in general and in particular over the attempt by several white members of the church to keep two black members from a non-segregated area of the sanctuary during worship.[1] After worshipping separately, but as part of the Methodist connection for seven years, Allen and his followers left the connection in 1796 to establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church.[2]

The issue which finally precipitated their departure from the connection was, at least on the surface, an issue of polity: the *Book of Discipline* required that every deed of church property contain the trust clause, vesting control the church property in the

[1] Hunter Dickinson Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts: A Social History of Southern Methodism -- 1865-1900,* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969, reprinted from the first edition published in Richmond, Virginia in 1938) 2; Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and their Relations,* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) 170-171.
[2] Norwood, 170.

greater church.[3] But Allen and his friends were naturally reluctant to have their church building, the Mother Bethel church which they acquired in 1794, controlled by white men who controlled the connection and, directly or indirectly, were responsible for the discrimination they had suffered at St. George's.[4] Though the issue appeared to be one of polity – connectionalism verses congregationalism[5] – at the center of all polity issues are theological concerns. Had it not been for the discrimination within the Methodist Episcopal Church, Allen and his friends might never have walked out of St. George's church, nor felt the need to lead his followers to leave the connection altogether. But human nature being what it is, discrimination was inevitable and Allen's concerns over the trust clause were completely justifiable. So, in 1796, the Bethel A.M.E. Church was formed outside of the Methodist Connection and twenty years later several other African American worshipping communities joined Bethel in the formation of the A.M.E. denomination in 1816.[6] The first significant schism of Methodism was thus completed.

Other important schisms involving the black members of the Methodist Episcopal Church were stirring at the same time, however, led by leaders such as New York's Peter Williams, a former slave who had purchased his freedom.[7] Black Methodists in New York -- who were eager for a separate place to worship free from discrimination by their white brethren -- formed the "African Methodist Episcopal Church in the city of New York (Zion Chapel) in 1801.[8] Zion Chapel remained, for the time being, subject to the Methodist connection. Then in 1821, Zion and several other

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 172.
[8] Ibid., 173.

black churches in the Northeast, asked the New York and Philadelphia conferences to create a separate annual conference for black members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.[9] With the refusal of New York to agree, these church banded together to form the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1821.[10]

It was issues surrounding the power of the episcopacy and representation of local preachers and lay representation to conference that were behind the schism which led to the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1828.[11] The sense of power and excitement that flooded the nation as a consequence of its highly successful experiment with democracy led some in the Methodist Episcopal Church to agitate for democratic reforms in Methodist ecclesial polity in the early years of the 19th century. That agitation came to a head in the 1820 General Conference upon the passage, by a two-thirds vote, of a motion to provide for the election of general superintendents from a pool of candidates proposed by the bishops.[12] Despite the large margin by which it passed, Joshua Soule, a newly-elected Bishop at that Conference with a strong interest in protecting the powers of the episcopacy, persuaded the Conference to immediately suspend the new rule.[13] Then four years later, the democratic reforms of the 1820 General Conference were reversed.[14]

Those who opposed the democratic reforms failed to recognize the strength of emotion surrounding this issue and so undertook no real effort to reconcile with those who favored reform of Methodist ecclesial polity.[15] As a direct result of this lack of vision, the reformers formed themselves into "union societies" for the purpose of

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 175, 182.
[12] Ibid., 176.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 178.
[15] Ibid., 177

continuing their call for reform; they carried on their discussion in various publications advocating for reform.[16] As might be anticipated given the circumstances, the hostilities escalated. In retaliation for their continued efforts at reform, several local pastors were suspended and later expelled from the Church entirely and several others, including Dennis Dorsey and William Poole, were censured by the Baltimore Annual Conference for his participation in the union societies.[17] In 1828, motions were made by the reformers at General Conference to reconsider their proposals, and appeals were made to reinstate those who had been expelled; both failed.[18] The implication was clear – reform within the Methodist Episcopal Church will not happen and those who continue advocating for it will be silenced by expulsion.

As a result of the action taken at the 1828 General Conference and the events that led up to it, the reformers called a meeting of all the union societies to consider separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church.[19] In November, 1828 that meeting was held in Baltimore; two years later the Methodist Protestant Church was formed.[20]

Frederick A. Norwood captures so well the dynamics that led to this particular schism:

> Here, then, is a classic recipe for the making of a schism. Begin with a long frustrating controversy over certain principles. Mix in strong personalities, parliamentary maneuvers, gag rules, reprisals against opponents, individual test cases; increase the pressure and heat. Box in the forces of change till there is no way out. Then expel the dissidents. There will be losses along the way. Many who began liberal turned conservative, sometimes for admirable motives... Some, undoubtedly, were ambitious men... [who] loved the church too much to cling to reform if that meant schism. Among the radical reformers, a similar mixture of motives is observable. Some regarded themselves too highly; others were unable to compromise; some were willing to sacrifice

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 179.
[18] Ibid., 181.
[19] Ibid., 182.
[20] Ibid.

> personal fortune in commitment to great principle. The result was tragedy, for individuals and for the Christian community.[21]

Though Norwood was referring to the schism that resulted in the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church, he could just as easily have been writing about the 1844 schism that resulted in the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

A CHURCH DIVIDED: THE 1844 SCHISM

At the heart of all of the significant disputes within the Methodist Episcopal Church, especially those which have led to schism, have been many complex issues. Certainly the moral and theological issues surrounding the institution of slavery were at the heart of the 1844 schism. But of equal importance, at least so far as an analysis of the anatomy of schism is concerned, is the ecclesiological issue: what is the proper role of the Church and how should it pursue its mission? Hunter Dickinson Farish describes two different ecclesiologies expressed by the various parties in the 1844 schism – the "separate spheres" ecclesiology and the "humanitarian mission" ecclesiology.[22] Of course, whether these different ecclesiologies shaped the parties' respective moral and theological positions on the substantive issue of slavery, or whether the substantive issue shaped the parties' respective ecclesiologies is an open question.

On the one hand, those who opposed the abolitionism of the extremists in the North believed that the Church should limit its mission to those "activities [which] were definitely and distinctly defined by the Scriptures."[23] Since Scripture recognizes slavery "as an institution subject to temporal authority," the church should not

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[21] Ibid., 184.
[22] Farish, Ibid., 4.
[23] Ibid.

"intermeddle" with it.[24] The church's sole involvement with respect to the institution of slavery is "to enforce the moral obligations growing out of the relationship."[25] The church and the state had "separate spheres" of authority and one should not meddle in the other. On the other hand, those who detested the institution of slavery and believed the Church had a moral and theological obligation to oppose it at all costs "gave to the Scriptures a less strict interpretation"...and "tended to impose upon the church a broader 'humanitarian' mission than the 'Scriptural' mission advocated" by proponents of the "separate spheres" ecclesiology.[26] According to Farish, the "clash between these two opposing points of view" was responsible for the 1844 schism.[27] Perhaps I am a bit *too* cynical, but my sense is that we in the Church have a very human tendency to adapt our theology to accommodate our practical and political concerns. I believe that those in the Church who actively opposed abolition did not do so because of any particular ecclesiology, but rather because they wanted to preserve peace within the connection and continue ministering to both the slaveholder and the slave in the south. To adopt anything but a "separate spheres" understanding of the Church would have jeopardized that mission.

From the beginning, Methodism has had a strange relationship to the issue of slavery. What follows is a brief survey of the pronouncements, policies and practices within the Methodist Episcopal Church leading up to the 1844 schism:

1780

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

At annual meeting of all of the traveling preachers of Methodism in 1780, slavery was condemned and traveling preachers were required to free their slaves.[28] Within three years following this meeting, local preachers were also required to emancipate their slaves wherever the laws of the state permitted.[29]

1784

The Methodist Episcopal Church was officially formed and adopted Wesley's "General Rules" including the prohibition on "the buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them."[30] Because slavery was already deeply imbedded within the Church, the organizing conference of the MEC "adopted rules requiring members who owned slaves in States where there was no legal obstacle to emancipation to provide for their gradual emancipation or to withdraw [or be expelled] from the Church."[31] Furthermore, new members could not be admitted to the Methodist Episcopal Church until they had emancipated their slaves.[32]

1785

The 1784 Rules on slavery contained in the Discipline were suspended due to quick and strong reaction in opposition thereto.[33] However, the General Rules, with its prohibition on buying or selling slaves with an intention to enslave, remained.[34]

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[28] Lewis McCarrol Purifoy, Jr. *The Methodist Episcopal Church, South and Slavery, 1844-1865,* (Dissertation presented at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ph.D., 1965; published Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1984), 2, citing *Methodist Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Annual Conference (1780), 12.*

[29] Ibid.

[30] Farish., 4, citing *Minutes of the General Conference of 1784, pp. 14-15; and* William Warren Sweet, *The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War,* (Cincinnati, 1912) 16-17. Note that merely owning slaves is not prohibited. Ibid. Though Farish suggests that the General Rules containing this prohibition on slavery was adopted by the Organizing Conference in 1784, Purifoy suggests that it wasn't until 1789 that this rule was included in the General Rules. Purifoy, 4.

[31] Farish., 5; Purifoy, 3.

[32] Purifoy, 3.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid, 3-4.

1785 - 1796

The Discipline contains no rules on slavery.[35]

1796

The second General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church is held and new rules on slavery are adopted. First, the Conference affirms its strong belief that slavery is "the great evil." Next, it adopts new rules (1) prohibiting any slaveholder from holding office *in the future* unless he promises to free them, according to the laws of the state and "as circumstances of the case would permit;" (2) requiring all preachers to speak to a prospective member who was a slaveholder about the evils of slavery; and (3) excluding from membership anyone who sold a slave and requiring all members who purchased a slave to free him or her after recovering the investment in the slave, as determined by the Annual Conference to which the member belonged.[36]

1800

The General Conference of 18●● eliminated the rule requiring preachers to talk to a prospective member who was a slaveholder before admitting him or her into membership in the Church.[37] Further, a new rule was added requiring traveling preachers to emancipate their slaves, provided the state allowed it, no matter how the slave was acquired. Specifically, the new rule read as follows: "When any traveling preacher becomes an owner of a slave or slaves, by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our Church, unless he execute, *if it be practicable*, a legal emancipation of such slaves, conformably to the laws of the state in which he lives"

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[35] Ibid., 3.
[36] Purifoy, 5.
[37] Ibid.

(emphasis added).[38] In addition, the General Conference of 1800 called for the various annual conferences of the church to encourage their state legislators to permit emancipation.[39]

1804

In 1804, the General Conference changed the rules once again to permit "the selling of slaves...at the request of the slave in cases of mercy and humanity."[40] Unfortunately, the Conference didn't stop there. It added the following statement regarding the duty of slaves toward their owners: "Let our preachers...admonish and exhort all slaves to render due respect and obedience to the commands and interests of their respective masters."[41] Cleary, the retreat from the early anti-slavery stand of the Methodist Episcopal Church was in full retreat.

1808

In 1808, the General Conference finally repealed all rules on slavery as applicable to private members.[42] Now, there was no obstacle to full membership for any private member who bought, sold or owned slaves; the only remaining restrictions had to do with members who held official positions in the church and with those in the ministry.[43]

1816

By 1816, even the rule prohibiting slaveholders from holding official positions in the Church was significantly softened. Now, holding slaves bars serving in official positions within the Church only where "the laws of the State in which he lives will

[38] Ibid., 6.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 6-7.
[41] Ibid., 7.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

admit of emancipation *and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom.*"[44] (emphasis added). This change in the rules became known as "the Great Compromise" of 1816.[45] And, as Louis Purifoy points out, by 183● most states permitted emancipation only if the freed slave left the state. However in most such states, the freed slave *would* be permitted to remain in the state upon petition to and approval by the legislature or the courts.[46] So the debate now focuses on just how far a slaveholding member in official positions must go in order to free his slaves. Furthermore, it is important to remember that rule of 1800 required traveling preachers to emancipate their slaves *if practicable.*[47] Is it "practicable" to free a slave if the traveling preacher must first petition the state legislature or the county court for permission?[48]

1824

In the last concession to its anti-slavery roots, the General Conference of 1824 actually provided for both local and traveling *African American* preachers, for separate conferences for blacks "where there was a sufficient number of colored preachers to warrant them", and encouraged slaveholders to allow the slaves to learn to read and give them time to attend worship.[49] As Purifoy suggests, "the conservative formula as now completed could be summarized as follows: leave the institution of slavery alone, and minister to the slave. The old anti-slavery Church of the 178●'s had made its peace with slavery."[50]

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[44] Ibid., 8, quoting from *General Conference Journal (1816)*, 169-170.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] See footnote 39.
[48] Purifoy, 11.
[49] Ibid., 9, citing *General Conference Journal (1824)*, 294.
[50] Purifoy, 9.

What the conservative contingent within the Church had not counted on was the strong anti-slavery sentiment that was on the rise in the 1830s and the impact that would have on the Methodist Episcopal Church.[51] About the same time as the reformers who would eventually leave the Church to form the Methodist Protestant Church in 1828 began to form themselves into "union societies,"[52] the anti-slavery contingent within the Methodist Episcopal Church began to form abolitionist societies in the mid 1830s, especially in New England and New Hampshire.[53]

1836

At the General Conference of 1836 held in Cincinnati, two members of the New England Annual Conference who were strong abolitionists spoke to an anti-slavery group in Cincinnati. The General Conference censured these two men for their participation in the anti-slavery meeting.[54] In return, Orange Scott, an important abolitionist leader in the Church demanded the Conference censure slavery.[55] Although Scott's petition lost, it was becoming clear that the "great compromise" of 1816 was beginning to crumble.

1840

The issue of slavery was once again before the 1840 General Conference when the question of "negro testimony" in church trials was raised.[56] Although the Conference decided that such testimony should not be permitted "in any state where [negro testimony] was denied in trials at law,"[57] the abolitionists kept pushing their

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[51] Ibid.
[52] See footnote 17.
[53] Purifoy, 9.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 10.
[57] Ibid.

anti-slavery agenda. Next, the abolitionists attacked the "Great Compromise" of 1816, which required traveling preachers to free their slaves "if practicable."[58] Rather than try to define "if practicable," the Conference issued an "advisory resolution" which, though it was never included in the Discipline, essentially again revised the rule once again.[59] Now, ministers in the Methodist Episcopal Church would be permitted to own slaves if the state would not permit the freed slave to "enjoy freedom."[60] Since most states required a freed slave to leave the state, the action of the General Conference of 1840 held traveling preachers to the same standards and expectations with regard to slavery as any other member of the Church – practically none.[61] Following the 1840 General Conference, many of the abolitionists sensed that theirs was a lost cause and so in 1843 they left the Church to form the Wesleyan Methodist Church.[62]

1844

Despite the departure from the Church of many of the abolitionists in 1843, when it looked like finally the Church was rid of the abolitionist's agitation and the Church could finally be peace,[63] the issues which lay just beneath the surface emerged with a vengeance. According to Purifoy, the anti-abolitionists in the South pushed for an acknowledgment by the General Conference that slavery was Biblically sanctioned – the South Carolina Annual Conference wanted Samuel Dunwody's "sermon 'which contains precisely the Scriptural doctrine of Slavery – and answers conclusively the objection of those who contend that Slavery is always a moral evil,' to be

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[58] Ibid., 11.
[59] Ibid, 11, 29.
[60] Ibid., 11, citing *General Conference Journal (1840),* 171.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., footnote 29.
[63] Ibid, 23.

published...and circulated within the Conference."[64] Then the name calling got into full swing, with the *Southern Christian Advocate* calling the abolitionists of New England "frothy parvenus of ecclesiastical agitation, the blustering mongers of stale truisms and misty abstractions, the small men who would be great..."[65]

Yet, despite the bravado of the Southern anti-abolitionists, the nation was experiencing a swell in anti-slavery sentiment.[66] The abolitionists insisted that "slaveholding is a sin; that every slaveholder is a sinner, and ought not to be admitted to the pulpit or the communion; that the Methodist Episcopal Church is responsible for slavery within its pale. That the only way to prevent entire dissolution among us as a Church is an entire separation from the South."[67] With such uncompromising rhetoric on both sides of the issue, the dispute had become so personal and so bitter, rational debate was all but impossible.

That set the stage for the appeal of Francis Harding over his suspension by the Baltimore Annual Conference for refusing "to manumit five slaves which had come into his possession through marriage."[68] His home state, Maryland, allowed manumission only if the freed slave left the state, and so Harding argued that it was not *practicable* for him manumit. Of course, his argument was based on the advisory opinion of the 1840 General Conference interpreting "practicable" to mean only in cases where the state allows the freed slave to "enjoy freedom" within the state following manumission. Surprisingly, given the trend of the Church towards greater rights for the slaveholder,

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[64] Ibid, 24, citing *Report of the Committee to Investigate the Sermon on Slavery by the Reverend Samuel Dunwody, South Carolina Conference,* 1837 (MS in Wofford College Library, Spartanburg, South Carolina).
[65] Purifoy, 24, citing *Southern Christian Advocate* (Charleston, South Carolina), May 3, 1844.
[66] Ibid., 25.
[67] Ibid., citing a resolution of the newly formed Wesleyan Methodist Church expressed at an anti-slavery convention held in 1843 and quoted in James M. Buckley, *Constitutional and Parliamentary History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1912), 256.
[68] Purifoy, 28, citing *General Conference Journal,* (1844), 29.

the suspension of Harding by the Baltimore Conference was sustained by wide majority.[69] The South interpreted the result as a complete retreat from the conservative position that been carefully forged by the Church over the previous decades -- if it was "practicable" for Harding to free his slaves, then all ministers in the South would be required to free theirs.[70]

The final blow to the principle of conservatism came with the charge against Bishop James Osgood Andrew, who was made an unwilling slaveholder through inheritance and marriage. At the time he was elected Bishop, Andrew was not a slaveholder; having since become a slaveholder was intolerable to the Northern constituency he served.[71] Though attempts were made by the moderates to forestall any action and maintain peace within the Conference, the Bishops to whom the issue was referred were unable to determine an adequate resolution of the issue.[72] A resolution was then introduced requesting Andrew to resign, but knowing the impact that his resolution would have on the Southern Church, Andrew let it be known that he could not resign.[73] Before that resolution could be considered by the Conference, a substitute was offered, which resolved "that it is the sense of the General Conference that he desist from the exercise of this office so long as the impediment remains."[74]

The South interpreted the resolution as a suspension and argued that the Conference had no legal authority to take such action since Andrew had not been properly charged nor tried for any offense by his Annual Conference.[75] After much bitter debate, the substitute resolution was brought to the floor for a vote, and passed by

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[69] Purifoy, 30.
[70] Ibid., 30, 31.
[71] Ibid., 31.
[72] Ibid., 33.
[73] Ibid, 34.
[74] Ibid., 35, quoting *General Conference Journal,* (1844), 65-66.
[75] Ibid., 35 – 37.

a wide margin.[76] The South could not abide the result, and within two days, a resolution was introduced calling upon the Conference to develop and adopt a "peaceable division of the Church" which came to be known as the Plan of Separation.[77] The position of the South following the passage of the substitute resolution was expressed in the "Declaration of the Southern Members" --

> "the continued agitation on the subject of slavery and abolition in a portion of the church – the frequent action on that subject in the General Conference – and especially the extra-judicial proceedings against Bishop Andrew...must produce a state of things in the South which renders a continuance of the jurisdiction of that General Conference over these conferences inconsistent with the success of the ministry in the slaveholding states."[78]

As Purifoy suggests, it no longer mattered which side was "correct." The escalating bitterness over the issue of slavery made it impossible for the Church to successfully carry out its mission, either in the North or in the South.[79]

Separation was, I believe, not only inevitable but *necessary* in order for the Church to minister to the very diverse interests of the nation. Only then could the Church be about the business of saving souls, in the particular contexts to which it was called. Though I deplore the institution of slavery, I understand the argument of many in the South that for the Church to intermeddle with the civil laws of the State would alienate the slaveholder and eliminate any opportunity to be in ministry to the slave. On the other hand, there comes a time when the Church must take a stand and declare its identity, no matter what the costs. Perhaps both were necessary – a ministry to the slave and a strong stance against.

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[76] Ibid., 53.
[77] Ibid., 55.
[78] Ibid., 56, quoting *General Conference Debates,* (1844), 200.
[79] Ibid.

However, the purpose of this paper is not to debate the substance of the issue, but to examine the anatomy of schism. Once again, Frederick Norwood's words ring a haunting note:

> Here, then, is a classic recipe for the making of a schism. Begin with a long frustrating controversy over certain principles. Mix in strong personalities, parliamentary maneuvers, gag rules, reprisals against opponents, individual test cases; increase the pressure and heat. Box in the forces of change till there is no way out. Then expel the dissidents. There will be losses along the way. Many who began liberal turned conservative, sometimes for admirable motives... Some, undoubtedly, were ambitious men... [who] loved the church too much to cling to reform if that meant schism. Among the radical reformers, a similar mixture of motives is observable. Some regarded themselves too highly; others were unable to compromise; some were willing to sacrifice personal fortune in commitment to great principle. The result was tragedy, for individuals and for the Christian community.[80]

So, have we in the Church learned anything about how to go about the task of defining our mission, how to approach disputes concerning that mission? Certainly in the dispute over the issue of homosexuality in the Church today, we see many "strong personalities, parliamentary maneuvers...reprisals against opponents and individual test cases." I believe the question is whether or not we will allow the argument to escalate so far and the bitterness to become so deep that measured, rational discussion becomes impossible. I fear that it may already have become so. If it has, will we have the wisdom to acknowledge that separation, even if only temporary, may be the best solution? Will we find the grace and self-restraint to avoid the bitterness that infected the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South after the Plan of Separation was implemented? Will we love the Church enough to allow it to minister to the different needs of a vastly divers nation, even if to do so requires separation? I pray that students of history will help us avoid schism, but if that is too

[80] Ibid., 184.

much to ask, I pray that we all love the Church too much to allow the bitterness to destroy it.

Methodism in Northwest Missouri

By Rev. C.O. Ransford

The Methodist evangelists entered Missouri in 1806 immediately following the Louisiana Purchase. At the time of the Platte Purchase in 1836 there 52 preachers serving 37 charges in 6 districts with 7526 white, 940 colored and 427 Indian members: Total 8893. In 1838 two preachers under Jesse Greene, Presiding Elder of the Lexington District, were sent to the Platte Purchase. After a year's labor they reported 389 members. The next year 675 members were reported. In 1840 the first preacher, J. T. Peery was appointed for the northern part of the Platte country called Nodaway. He reported 170 members as the result of his labors. The Methodists were numerous among the first settlers in all the Platte Purchase. The work grew rapidly, Weston and Plattsburg being important places. The first class at Weston was organized April 7, 1838 and in 1844 became a station. There was also a large Methodist settlement at Sparta, the original county seat of Buchanan County. What is now the Dearborn class came out in a body from Kentucky. The class leader John Burgess brought along his class book, which unfortunately for the historian was placed in the corner stone of the present church house.

Around Rochester and Savannah in Andrew County were also numerous Methodists. These two places had strong classes before St. Joseph. The Savannah Circuit began in 1842 by Rev. S. S. Colburn and reported 438 members for the first year. Edwin Robinson, preacher in charge Savannah Circuit in 1843, was the first Methodist of whom there is any record to preach in St. Joseph. As the lot on Third and Felix Streets now occupied by the Western Union Telegraph Co. on which the first Methodist Church was built in St. Joseph was deeded to the Methodists by Joseph Robidoux when he laid out the town sometime before July 26, 1843 it is very evident that the Methodists were among the first, if not the first to preach in St. Joseph. The first church house in St. Joseph was a log structure 20 x 30 feet in dimensions near Third and Francis Streets and was built by the Presbyterians in 1844. The Methodist Church, built in 1846 on Third and Felix Streets, was a brick 40 x 60 feet in dimensions.

In 1842 there were four appointments in the Platte country with 1419 members. Enoch M. Marvin came this year to his second Conference appointment, Oregon Mission which included all of the Platte Country north of Savannah. When Joab

Spencer, who entered the Conference from the Savannah Circuit in 1856 and was appointed to Rock Port came, he found traces of Marvin's work everywhere in Atchison and Holt counties. In 1847 after ten years labor there were nine appointments in the Platte country, three south of St. Joseph with 796 members and six north with 1●56 total 1852. In 1845 Maryville first appears as an appointment with 159 members. The district was called Weston. Wm. Ketron was the Presiding Elder and Alexander Spencer was the preacher in charge. This was the time of the division of the church, but the work begun by preachers from the south who adhered to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was continued. Twenty years after the beginning of the work and twelve years after the division of the church there were five circuits in the four north west counties with 1158 members.

Nor did the work cease later during the four years of Civil War and persecution of the preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; most of whom were prevented from preaching. In 187● there were appointments in every county. Though many formerly connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had left the state there were still 863 members, 324 being in Nodaway County.

The church that has suffered and struggled through the strife of division now after seventy-six years is still virile and zealous. Some classes in northwest Missouri have been discontinued and the members have gone into other churches. But in those undivided communities where the Methodist Episcopal Church, South has congregations every one is strong and flourishing. Ravenwood, Guildford and Wilcox each have new modern church houses with large well organized active congregations. Fairfax congregation in Atchison County has recently laid the corner stone for a modern church house which will cost completed $18,●●●. It is no vain boast to say this will be the best and most modern church house in all northwest Missouri.

The membership of the two Methodist Churches in the five northwest Missouri counties is as follows:--

County	*M.E.C.S.*	*M.E.*	*Both*
Andrew	438	953	1391
Holt	443	1●68	1511
Atchison	425	1●72	1497
Nodaway	134●	3219	4559
Buchanan	28●2	1777	4579
Total	**5448**	**8089**	**13537**

No other portion of Missouri has as many Methodist congregations and so many members as Nodaway County. Ray and Saline, the nearest in membership, have 3●●● members each.

The Methodist folk who early settled in north-west Missouri sought the best for themselves and their families by opening their homes to the first itinerant preachers and as their number increased built church houses and organized community schools and academies for the education of their children. There is not a town and scarcely a railroad station in all this country without a Methodist Church and for the most part the congregations are strong and self-supporting.

From the homes and congregations of these faithful pioneer heroes and heroines have come some of the most faithful and useful preachers the church has known. In the early fifties Andrew County gave Joab Spencer to the Church for a long life of blessed usefulness in Kansas Indian Missions and later in Missouri. The brilliant preacher and pastor of the largest and most important church on the Pacific Coast, Trinity, Los Angeles, Charles C. Selecman is another Andrew County product. The Graham class gave the four Hedgpeth brothers to the church. Henry H. Hedgpeth, presiding elder and pastor on several charges in this country, was considered one of the most promising young men and strongest preachers Missouri Methodism has known. Rev. S. E. Hoover well known in Nodaway County came from Forest City, Holt County. Jesse T. Moorman and H. D. Groves, President Howard-Payne College came from Pleasant Grove Class, Nodaway County. The Griffith Class out of which Wilcox congregation has grown gave Chaney Grimes and his wife to the Conference.

The work of Rev. Grimes is being continued by his son Rev. C. C. Grimes, one of the strongest preachers in the conference, who preaches to the largest congregations ever assembled Sunday by Sunday at Columbia to hear any man.

The year 1916 marks the centennial of the organization of the Missouri Conference. This conference when organized included the four territories of Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and Arkansas. There were then only nineteen circuits with 31●● white and 73 colored members. Out of the Missouri Conference in the four original states and nine others to which the influence of the Conference has extended there have grown thirty-six conferences with 2,●●●,●●● white members and probationers besides nine Conferences for Negroes with 50,000 members and one for Indians in Oklahoma

with 5000 members. Among the white conferences are six for German and Scandinavian people.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South has three conferences in Missouri with 419 traveling and 276 local preachers, 1074 church houses, 129,727 members and 106,980 Sunday School scholars.

The Methodist Episcopal Church has two English-speaking conferences, two German and one colored. The English-speaking conferences have 339 traveling and 192 local preachers, 676 church houses, 77,571 members and 77,514 Sunday School scholars.

The work of Methodism is growing. In the three cities of St. Louis, Kansas City and St. Joseph last Easter Sunday more than four thousand new members were received. Some one has figured out that last year the Methodist Church added to its rolls one new member every five minutes and built a new church house of average size every fifteen hours.

Once the glorious morn has broken, who shall say,
What the unimagined glories of the day,
What the evils that shall perish in its ray;
Aid the dawning tongue and pen,
Aid it hosts of royal men,
Aid it paper, aid it type,
Aid it for the hour is ripe,
And our earnest must not slacken into play,
Sons of Wesley, eager, earnest, lead the way!

As Southey an English writer said of John Wesley, "I consider John Wesley as the most influential mind of the last century—the man who will have produced the greatest effects, centuries, or perhaps millenniums hence, if the present race of men should continue so long," so may we say of the Church under God he founded. Methodism has encircled the globe. Her missionaries and ministers are preaching Christ in many languages to people of every race and kindred.

The twentieth century prophetic of an early union of all Methodism dawns with bright hopes and fair prospects of an ever widening extension of the kingdom of God and the continuously beneficent influence of Methodism.

Some Notes of "The Jerks"

John O. Gooch

One might think that the title refers to persons whose behavior we don't like, or who are socially inept. In some cases it might, but in this case it refers to a phenomenon associated with camp meetings and other frontier revivals.

Readings about revivals and camp meetings almost always lead to references of physical reactions to strong emotional experiences, often referred to as "the jerks," or "the falling down exercise." Although these were most common on the American frontier, and most often found in stories about camp meetings, they were not confined to that setting. Wesley makes vague references in his Journal about such strong reactions to some of his preaching. For our purposes in this article, we will confine ourselves to the American frontier. We know, from the journals and letters of the circuit riders that "the jerks" were a common reaction to impassioned preaching, but the best descriptions come from other parts of the Western Conference.

First, what do we mean by "the jerks"? Peter Cartwright, the pioneer preacher of Illinois, described them as "a convulsive jerking all over."

> To see those proud young gentlemen and young ladies, dressed in their silks, jewelry, and prunella, from top to toe, take the *jerks* would often excite my risibilities. The first jerk or so, you would see their fine bonnets, caps, and combs fly; and so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a wagoner's whip. [1]

Thomas Wright, pastor of the Maramec (sic) Circuit, described the same phenomenon taking place at a camp meeting held in Ste. Genevieve shortly after the New Madrid Earthquake of 1811.

> I was convinced, in my own mind, the parties so jerking could not avoid it. I noticed a young woman of fair hair, throwing herself backwards and forwards, and being held by several persons, women and strong men, who seemed to use great exertion to stop the jerking, without any perceivable relief to the girl. After being agitated in this way for several hours, she sank down apparently lifeless. This sight led to my own conviction and conversion.[2]

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[1] Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography,* p. 44

[2] Recollections of N. Montgomery, quoted in Woodard, *Annals of Methodism in Missouri,* pp. 137-38.

One other descriptive account will suffice.

> The attacks came on suddenly and unexpectedly, and in many cases the writhings and contortions of body were frightful. Some of the victims would sway forward and backward with a violence that seemed to be sufficient to have dislocated their joints; and this, too, when two or more strong persons were holding them by each arm. If let loose they would pitch forward at full length, striking their foreheads against the ground or floor, or whatever else was immediately before them, then as suddenly and as violently throw themselves at full length backwards, striking on the back part of their heads; hence the necessity of their being firmly held to prevent their being killed. Others when attacked would suddenly fall, and if let alone would flounce, much after the manner of a fish when first thrown from the water.[3]

And what does all this mean for the Christian life? We know that John Wesley, and Francis Asbury after him, believed strongly in the centrality of the personal religious experience. Elements of that experience included a sense of guilt, a feeling of separation from God, a fear for the future, despair. These were signs of a readiness for conversion, beginning in the seeker. After earnest struggle with a conviction of sin, there might come the outpouring of God's grace, a sense of forgiveness, and then relief, joy, and wonder. It is not clear if "the jerks" were part of the conviction or the conversion. Arguments could be made either way. If they were part of conviction, it would have been easy to see them as signs of the struggle with the devil, the wild physical movements being a part of the devil's attempt to hold the seeker back from grace. If they were part of the conversion, it could be argued they were manifestations of joy and the working of the Holy Spirit.

The circuit riders and other revival preachers were not convinced that "the jerks" were necessarily a good thing. Their writings refer to calls for order and attempts to keep a check on strong emotions and a sense of control over the proceedings. "Falling down" or "the jerks" were not a convincing sign of the power of God for these preachers.

"The jerks" were a common phenomenon at the beginnings of the frontier camp meeting movement, beginning with the 1801 outbreak at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. By

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[3] David R. McAnally, *Methodism in Missouri,* p. 265

1810 or so, the peak of the phenomenon had passed, though there were still outbreaks from time to time afterward.

Methodism in Missouri began in 1805, but there were camp meetings very early in the period. We don't have clear records of outbreaks of "the jerks" at Missouri camp meetings or revivals, but...the church in Missouri was in the same kind of social situation as the churches in Kentucky and Tennesee. So we could assume that "the jerks" also occurred in Missouri, particularly during the period of high emotions following the New Madrid earthquakes of 1811–1812.

Today's church, of course, would be appalled by an outbreak of "the jerks" or any other strong manifestations of emotion. And there was never any indication that such manifestations led to a significant change in frontier Methodism.

[The careful reader will note that Edwin Robinson was mentioned in the Methodism in Northwest Missouri article as "the first Methodist of whom there is any record to preach in St. Joseph". A few years ago the Archives was given a packet of letters written to Rev. David Ross. One was from Edwin Robinson, who at the time was appointed to serve in Fayette. Following the letter is an article about the circulstances surrounding his death. The incident relayed apparently took place just one week after the letter was written.]

Fayette, Mo.
August 29th, 1864

Rev. Ross, [Rev. David Ross of Green County]

Dear Bro. your last has been unanswered until now in consequence of absence. I lack but one appointment of having completed my four years work on this District. And although it has been four years of great trouble in the land, yet I have gone forward with my work. And under God, the Church in this Dis. is still in a perfect state organization. Our labour has not been in vain, recently we have had some fine revivals but what awaits us we cannot tell.

We are in the midst of excitement, the country is full of Bushwhackers. This may be said of a large portion of north Mo. We have the Federals, also quite numerous skirmishing and ???ing is very common. Some light engagements, but no general engagement as yet. It's said there was a hard fight in about ten miles of my house yesterday. Report says the F—[Federals] were badly whipped. Horses are being taken by the wholesale on both sides. Houses searched and goods taken, etc. The worship of God frequently interrupted on the Sabbath day. I however, have had the good luck never to have a meeting interrupted. Neither have I as yet had anything taken from me, but I am now expecting to have the last horse taken from me. If the draft should be commenced here, God only knows what will follow. The men all say that if they have to fight they will choose sides for themselves and it is true they are nearly all on one side but they intend to remain quiet if possible.

Missouri Annual Conference is to meet on the 14th day in September at Richmond, Ray County. Such are the troubles of the country that it is now thought very undoubtful about our being able to go to it. If we start horseback we may be set afoot in a few miles. Besides a man is much more safe where he is well known. The people generally keep close about home.

We have had a remarkably dry summer. Corn crops in places are good. In this county they are very good. There are sections of the country where they will hardly make anything. Wheat in general is good. Some portions of the county have been visited with Flu with considerable mortality. Myself and family are in the enjoyment of moderately good health.

I have long waited for an opportunity to visit you, but the time has not yet come. Indeed the obstacles now are greater than ever before. I suppose the property of your county has been assessed. I trust you will not neglect to pay the taxes on my land at the time you pay for your own. I have reasons for wanting it strictly attended to. If it is paid, notify me of the amount and I will forward to you.

If I thought it advisable, I would like to say some things with reference to the future destinies of our country. But as the next two months will open up to us something of the future, I will only add I trust there is <u>light ahead.</u>

My love to Louisa and the family. Tell mother that we are well and that she may expect to hear from me soon. Remember us kindly to all my friends.

Yours affectionately,
Edwin Robinson

Edwin Robinson, a clergy member of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was killed by some Union soldiers near Fayette in the fall of 1864. His memoir that was printed in the conference journal for 1865 briefly describes the incident:

> EDWIN ROBINSON, for many years a Presiding Elder and "captain of the hosts" of our Israel in Missouri, fell by the hand of military ruffianism soon after our beloved Brother Caples. He was shot from his horse while quietly riding along the highway, simply because he was a Southern Methodist preacher. A good man and true, we mourn his tragic end, and pray for his cruel murderer.[i]

Three of the principal southern Methodist historians of the period, W.S. Woodard, W.M. Leftwich, and W.H. Lewis, describe this incident. The most detailed account is provided by Rev. Leftwich in his book, *Martyrdom in Missouri*:

Of the early life of the Rev. Edwin Robinson little has been learned. He was received on trial into the Missouri Annual Conference, M. E. Church, in 1837, with Thomas D. Clanton, Daniel T. Sherman, F. W. Mitchell and James G. F. Dunlany. Mr. Robinson's first appointment was junior preacher on the Greenville Circuit, in the Boonville District, with Moses B. Evans his senior, and Jesse Green, Presiding Elder.

He received regular appointments from the Conference every year, and filled them acceptably and usefully to the Church. In 1852 he was made Presiding Elder of the Richmond District, and for several years filled that high and responsible office to the satisfaction of the Church. He was once honored with a seat in the General Conference, and was always held in high esteem by the ministry and the Church.

Wise and prudent in counsel, and thoroughly Methodistic in all his feelings, sentiments and practice, he ever conserved the best interests of the Church of his choice. He was never very brilliant in the pulpit, but sound, practical, earnest and useful. So widely known, he is now as widely lamented.

When the war broke out he felt and saw the necessity of great caution and prudence in all his public services and private ways. He refrained scrupulously from canvassing the exciting events that were so rapidly transpiring. And his very humble, quiet, unobtrusive spirit and manner of life passed him through the troubles of the war about as evenly and safely as any other prominent Southern Methodist minister in the State, out of St. Louis, up to the fatal hour of his cold, cruel Murder.

In the fall of 1864 Mr. Robinson was residing about two miles south of Fayette, in Howard county, and traveling the Fayette Circuit.

He had formerly lived in Chillicothe, and when the troubles of that fall thickened and darkened around him so alarmingly, he made up his mind to remove his family either back to Chillicothe or into Grundy county, where his wife had some relatives living.

For this purpose he determined to precede his family and provide a home. Before setting out on the journey his wife prevailed on him, in view of the danger of traveling through the country, to go by way of Renick and take the

North Missouri R.R. He afterward, however, abandoned that route and set out in company with a colored man who lived in Chillicothe and had a wife at his house, and in whom he had the most implicit confidence. Instead of going through Glasgow they took a nearer and safer route, through Monticello and Old Chariton. When they reached the latter place, only two miles distant from Glasgow, they halted for a few moments in front of Moore's Hotel talking with some gentlemen, when a squad of soldiers, commanded by Capt. Merrideth, rode rapidly up and the following colloquy was had:

Captain,--"Who and what are you?"

"My name is Robinson and I am a Methodist preacher."

Captain,--"A Southern Methodist preacher."

"Yes, sir."

"That, sir, is enough to damn you," said the valiant captain, excitedly, and turning to his men said, "Blow his damned brains out," which was instantly done.

These facts were reported by the negro, to which some ladies, who at the time were looking out at the window, make the following additions: They say that after the above conversation, and before any order was given to shoot, Mr. Robinson and the negro were permitted to ride on. After they had gone about fifty yards Capt. Merrideth called the negro back and asked him what he knew about Robinson. He replied that he knew nothing about Robinson. He replied that he knew nothing of Robinson's politics, but that he had a very bad son who was a bushwhacker, upon which Merrideth dashed up to Robinson and either shot him himself or ordered his men to do it. As to who did the shooting the ladies are not fully agreed. Nor is it important. Captain Merrideth was in command, and the public verdict of the people, as well as the verdict of history, will hold him responsible.

He rode away from his victim after leaving an order that his body should not be removed on pain of death. For some reason the Captain did not take the dead man's horse, and the noble animal stood in silence and alone beside the body of his master whom he had so long borne—now pulseless, lifeless. Whether his person was robbed, has not transpired.

The ladies, true to the instincts of a finer and purer nature, and the warmer sympathies and loftier courage of humanity, notwithstanding the general terror and panic of the citizens, went out and pulled rails from the fence and made a rude pen around the dead man to prevent the hogs from profaning his body, and then sent a message to Mrs. Thomson, of Glasgow, informing her of the facts. This good lady caused a two-horse wagon to be prepared, and with several other "elect ladies," attended by two gentlemen, went out the following morning, which was the Sabbath, and brought his body into the city. His wife was summoned to look upon and follow to the grave the mangled remains of her beloved companion. Such was the reign of terror that the citizens of Glasgow were afraid to receive the body of the departed minister of God into their houses. He body was placed in the Christian Church, and the next day, Monday, followed to the town of Fayette by the disconsolate widow and a few silent mourners and deposited in the cemetery.[ii]

W. H. Lewis, in his *History of Methodism in Missouri*, quoted the above passage from Leftwich and then adds the following paragraph:

This present writer, who at that time had charge of the Howard College, attended his sad burial. He saw Mr. Robinson when he left Fayette with the negro Saturday morning, on his way to Chillicothe, and remarked at the time that he was making a very perilous trip. He who looked so dignified and manly that morning on his fine horse as he left Fayette in a few hours was dead, shot through the head because he was a Southern Methodist preacher.[iii]

W. S. Woodard, in the *Annals of Methodism in Missouri*, provided a similar account and obviously used Leftwich as a source without acknowledgement. He also misspells Robinson's name as "Roberson."[iv]

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[i] *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1858-1865* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1866), 542.

[ii] W. M. Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri*, vol. 2, (St. Louis: Southwestern Book and Publishing Company, 1870), 133-36.

[iii] W. H. Lewis, *The History of Methodism in Missouri for a Decade of Years from 1860 to 1870* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1890), 189.

[iv] W. S. Woodard, *Annals of Methodism in Missouri* (Columbia: E. W. Stephens, 1893), 149-51.